



Maj Gen Earnest O. Robbins II

Photo by Keith Fried



2002: Looking Back...and Forward

It's that time of year again, when each of us should pause and take account of the last 12 months and look forward to the challenges of the coming year. When I do so, I can't help but feel extremely proud and even awed by the magnitude and significance of all the things we're responsible for and the results of our efforts at every level. From our role in the ongoing war on terror to the progress we continue to make in preparing our installations to support our transforming air and space force, each of you, in some form or other, have placed service before self. That sense of purpose and sacrifice guarantees success.

We began 2002 in an air of uncertainty. The war on terror was just underway. We were defining our role in it and the effect the events of Sept. 11, 2001, would have on the way we do business. Over the course of the year, thousands of you left your families to support forward operations while thousands more undertook round-the-clock operations necessary to prosecute the war from home station. Based upon my personal observations, and from reports I've received from commanders to congressmen, you have hit nothing but home runs. Our ability to quickly establish and operate contingency air bases and support combatant commanders ensured that Air Force civil engineers remain the "engineers of choice" when the chips are down.

At home, we managed the largest infrastructure investment program the Air Force has seen in more than a decade. In 2002, we invested well over \$4 billion in military construction, family housing, and facility sustainment, restoration and modernization. I credit our tremendous teamwork, starting at the installations and running through the major commands and Air Staff. The task of developing, defending and executing a program of this magnitude is not easy to comprehend in terms of complexity and, at times, frustration at every level. Suffice it to say, you've helped move Air Force installation infrastructure well down the road to recovery. Our challenge now is to stay this course.

The year 2003 promises to be as challenging as 2002. Of foremost concern is the looming threat posed by Iraq. Without question, we'll play a central role in any potential combat operations. Our continual efforts to operate and maintain our existing, aged infrastructure through the application of traditional and innovative practices will remain at the forefront. At the same time, we'll have to stay on top of the multitude of issues related to transforming our Air Force to satisfy the vision of senior leaders in the Administration and Congress. From new mission beddowns to planning for a 2005 round of base realignment and closure, the future is full of challenges.

You are the backbone of the most respected air and space force in the world. Thank you, again, for all you do. I wish each and every one of you ... officers, NCOs, airmen, civilians and contractors ... a safe and prosperous New Year.

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